

Multicolored Secrets

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Secrets are the staple of the soul, and Satsuki has many. Set post-finale.
Random third-person POV.

Status: complete

Published: 2014-08-09

Words: 1351

Rated: Fiction T - Language: English - Characters: Satsuki K. - Reviews: 3
- Favs: 14 - Follows: 7

Original source: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/10604883/1/Multicolored-Secrets>

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Because this world needs more Kill la Kill fanfiction.

I consider myself an artist. Not some two-bit, back-alley hack who mutilated skin with splashes of raw, uncoordinated ink on internet stencils. No, my tattoos are works of art. Art that not only adorns the bodies of its wearers, but also reflects the nature of the souls within.

My profession, therefore, requires both a steady hand and a keen eye. I opened this shop, however, not because I adore the semantics of ink and skin.

I am in the business of unlocking secrets, secrets that allow me to understand the soul that bears them and then pour their essence into my ink and their skin. It is an experience like no other.

The bell over my door jingles, but I do not immediately look up. The harvest has been weak lately. While I enjoy a near-apocalypse as much as anyone, it affects the quality of my work. In a brush with death, the small worries and petty angers - the little things that scream out the character of the mind within - all but disappear before a ridiculous false nobility.

I had resigned myself to making trite, uninspired drivel, but something about the sharp clack of a heel against my linoleum made me look up.

Before me stood a girl, perhaps eighteen, but with a face much older. Her hair was short, its sharp lines telling me that it had been cut recently. Her gaze was cool, relaxed but reserved. It was all I could do to keep from cackling and rubbing my hands together. This was a girl chock-full of secrets.

Whatever tattoo she wanted, I swore to myself that it would be beautiful beyond imagination.

I rose to shake her hand, watching her carefully. She took mine firmly and without hesitation, but she looked pointedly away. Not in a gesture of nervousness or submission, but rather in one of supreme and purposeful disinterest. It was the gesture of an alpha-wolf, one that shouted "not only am I not threatened by you, but you are not even worthy of my attention."

Her greeting, however, was smooth. Still cool, but surprisingly courteous. At that moment, my confidence wavered. Normally I could instantly identify a person's weak points and formulate questions that would smoothly and kindly make them spill their guts to me. She, however...

What can I say to this girl?

I resolved to learn more as she described her wishes to me. She wanted a memorial tattoo. One shaped like a butterfly.

"A butterfly?" I asked, genuinely surprised. Most butterfly tattoos I had worked were for rebellious fourteen-year-olds.

"Yes," she affirmed resolutely, dipping her chin once in a firm nod. Immediately, however, her gaze darkened and her cobalt eyes all but disappeared in the shadow of her brows. Her voice, however, remained light as she said, as if by way of explanation, "Butterflies are such vain creatures, don't you think?"

The more I spoke with her the more I wanted to sink my teeth into her secrets, and I all but licked my lips as I showed her some of my sketches. But, to my disappointment, she did not stop to converse, only selecting almost at random a gaudy design almost overflowing with tails and eyespots. Again, I was surprised, and paused briefly to examine her conservative style of dress and reserved expression. She seemed to notice and pulled her lips out of a frown to grace me

with her amusement at my perplexity, but did not offer an explanation.

Just before I led her to my workspace, she rummaged through her skirt pocket for a sloppily-folded piece of paper and handed it to me. I opened it, and it was an all-but scribbled outline of a butterfly, its wings asymmetrical and bumpy. What caught my attention was the coloring. In violent scribbles of crayon the wings were coated in rainbow streaks, starting with red at the top and descending harshly to blue.

"I want the colors like this," she whispered, swallowing thickly. She shook her head as if to dissipate some cloud, lifting a finger to tap the paper in my hands. "My sister drew this for me to bring today." She offered, smiling a little. For some reason, the harsh juxtaposition of expressions made my heart sink in some realization that I was not yet conscious of.

I had her lay down on my table. She disrobed smoothly, seemingly unashamed, but her eyes took on an automated lifeless look that made my skin crawl. It was a face that spoke of unspeakable horrors that could only be endured by either a corpse or a stoic of Epictetian proportions. I was glad when I could no longer see her face.

As I set to work, I began to ask casual questions that would help me unravel her. I was shaken, but still determined to complete my *magnum opus*. I started by asking her why she wanted this tattoo. She paused for a moment before replying, simply,

"My mother died."

My other questions petered out when pitted against her monosyllabic answers. I grew frustrated as I went silent, disappointed that my tattoo may not be as beautiful as I wanted it.

As I worked the outline of the stencil down her back, I noticed the ridges of scars familiar to me. Crossing in sets of four that angled sharply close to her shoulders but then evened out to almost

horizontal at the small of her back, they were scars that I saw mostly on young men who grinned cockily at me when I saw them. Never so many, though. Some old, but some almost fresh. I was nervous about inking over them. I abandoned my regular tact and asked,

"Sorry, but, your back..." Her shoulders tensed but relaxed almost immediately, as if she was expecting my question.

"Yes. It's fine. It doesn't hurt. Please continue." I cocked my eyebrow at the obvious bullshit. Doesn't hurt? It looked like she had been having angry sex with a guitar player (or a vampire) every week for the last ten years. My mind was reeling with confusion, not able to fit the various pieces together to make a cogent theory.

"Do it." She commanded, and her tone made me set to work with renewed vigor.

By the end, I was almost in tears. It was awful. I knew nothing about this girl. Her secrets were still her own, and the tattoo was a gaudy disaster. I hadn't been able to find and pour her soul into her skin. I wasn't even able to get her name. I felt like a failure.

She, however, remained supremely aloof. She dressed, thanked and paid me, and headed for the door.

"Wait!" I called, blubbering out, "But... it's so ugly..."

"It should be." She turned sharply, her heel clicking, as she deliberately looked me in the eye for the first time. Light from the door shone behind her in ethereal brilliance and her gaze held me, frozen. "This," she continued, reaching up to tap her shoulder, "Is not a memorial. It is a reminder."

I knew she was throwing me a bone, stooping to my level. I hated myself for asking,

"Why?"

Again, her eyes darkened beneath her brows, her frown deepening.

"My body belongs to me now."

And she was gone, the bell chiming cheerfully as the sickening implication of her words hit me full force. The puzzle pieces, the deadened eyes, the scars, the pragmatic words, they all fell together in some semblance of a picture; but it was a picture I desperately did not want to see. For the first time in my life, I didn't want to know. In all my time, I'd never not wanted to know a secret, however dark, but that day I didn't want to know. I wanted to close my eyes and ears and shut my mind to the world.

I was sick. I couldn't think.

I didn't want to know.

I don't know why, but my one-shots always end up being unnecessarily artsy. Oh well. R & R!